

1999 Session Review

The Van Luven Report

Representative
Steve Van Luven
48th District

Co-Chairman -
Trade, Economic Development
and Housing Committee

House of
Representatives

Dear Friends,

After an extended session in May, the 1999 Legislature finally concluded. The even split of 49 Republicans and 49 Democrats in the House presented some unique challenges for us this year, including two House speakers, one from each party, and two chairs for each committee — Republican and Democrat. Our process was much slower and more deliberative than in the past.

Nevertheless, we accomplished many things during the session. Most notable was the passage of a historic transportation improvement plan that will help provide millions of dollars to the Eastside to relieve traffic congestion and improve safety.

We adopted a budget that funds education, provides salary increases for K-12 teachers, and addresses other important needs across the state for the next two years. And we are continuing to explore options to reduce the cost of housing and make it affordable for people.

Highlights of these issues and more are provided in this newsletter. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call my office. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your representative in the state Capitol.

Sincerely,



Rep. Steve Van Luven

Van Luven to join governor in Mexico trade mission

For the past 13 years, I've conducted business in Mexico and have developed many contacts.

For this reason, Gov. Gary Locke has asked me to join him with a delegation of business people in a trip to Mexico City later this month to meet with President Ernesto Zedillo. Our goal is to further open Washington's trading opportunities with Mexico, especially the apple market.

We will also spend a couple of days in Guadalajara, the capitol of Jalisco, meeting with my good friend, Gov. Alberto Cardenas. Three years ago, I helped to set up a sister-state agreement between Washington state and Jalisco, Mexico. This relationship has been both culturally and economically beneficial to our state. During this trip, our business delegation and the state tourism department will set up a display in Guadalajara showcasing Washington products and tourism opportunities.

As co-chairman of the House Trade, Economic Development and Housing Committee, I believe it is important to seek every opportunity for new jobs in our state. Expansion of trade into Mexico will help to create more jobs for Washington's families. ***This trip is not being taken at taxpayers' expense. Instead, I am paying my way.*** I have great expectations that if we can further open the trade door to Mexico, it will benefit all Washington citizens.



Rep. Steve Van Luven (left) talks to Gov. Gary Locke and Sen. Slade Gorton about expanding agriculture trade markets into Mexico.

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The Van Luven Report

Operating budget provides teacher pay raises

Throughout the session, we heard from those who felt teachers needed more compensation and from those who thought teachers are already fairly compensated. In the end, the final budget included the following:

- A 3 percent cost of living increase this year and 3 percent next year for all teachers;
- A 7 percent base salary increase for beginning teachers;
- A 5 percent base salary increase for teachers with one year experience;
- A 4 percent base salary increase for teachers with two and three years experience;
- A 3 percent base salary increase for teachers with four years experience;
- A 2 percent base salary increase for teachers with five years experience; and
- A 2 percent base salary increase for teachers in their 16th year and beyond.



Transportation budget benefits entire state

We adopted a \$4 billion transportation spending plan for the 1999-2001 biennium that will enable us to fight traffic congestion, build and maintain roads and bridges, improve the flow of people and products, support economic development, and improve the transportation system throughout the state. By ensuring that the transportation budget addresses critical needs in all areas of Washington, we are able to embark on the greatest transportation improvement effort in state history.

Statewide, the two-year transportation budget contains:

- \$1.23 billion for state highway improvements
- \$862 million for highway preservation and maintenance
- \$196 million for local government transportation projects

In part, this budget will use revenue generated by Referendum 49, which was approved by Washington voters last fall. Referendum 49 allows us to use the state's large and growing budget surplus, **rather than raising the gas tax**. Because the surplus funds that will be used are far in excess of the state's spending limit, there will be no effect on education, children's services, senior programs or any other area of the budget.

Eastside gains millions for highway improvements

The transportation budget provides more than \$34.5 million for highway projects in the 48th District. Here are the improvements scheduled for construction under the approved budget:

Interstate 90

- Bellevue to Issaquah: *Retrofit bridges to reduce damages from seismic forces.*

State Route 405

- Bellevue - Main Street undercrossing to northwest ramp overcrossing: *Bridge work and rehabilitation.*
- Bellevue - Coal Creek Parkway to SR 522: *Move high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane from outside to inside.*
- Bellevue - Coal Creek to Bothell: *Construct additional HOV lanes.*

- King County - NE 8th interchange: *New interchange.*
- King and Snohomish counties: *I-405 corridor analysis.*
- Kirkland - Northbound off ramp to SR 908: *Improve safety features.*
- Renton to Kirkland bridges: *Retrofit bridges to reduce damages from seismic forces*

State Route 520

- Bellevue - 104th Ave. NE to 124th Ave. N.E. interchange: *Construct east- and westbound HOV lanes.*
- Bellevue/Redmond - 124th Ave. NE interchange to Lake Sammamish Parkway: *Construct east- and west-bound HOV lanes.*
- Bellevue/Redmond - SR 520 bike path: *Construct bicycle/pedestrian path.*
- Bellevue/Redmond - NE 40th Street undercrossing and ramps: *Construct partial interchange.*
- Clyde Hill - 92nd Ave. NE bridge: *Construct sidewalk for pedestrian safety.*
- Lake Washington area - *Transportation alternatives study.*
- Lake Washington - Evergreen Point Bridge: *Retrofit bridge to reduce damages from seismic forces. Rehabilitate bridge by strengthening pontoons, anchors and mechanisms.*
- Medina - Pedestrian undercrossing: *Retrofit to reduce damages from seismic forces.*

Rep. Steve Van Luven • 48th District



Who pays for the stadiums?

Recently, a woman asked me why she is paying more property taxes to fund construction of the new baseball and football stadiums. I told her she wasn't. In fact, since she didn't live in King County, I told her she probably wasn't paying anything for the new stadiums. Even if she did live in King County, she might not be paying for them.

I wrote the legislation to authorize and fund construction for both stadiums. I sponsored the bills. I'm not paying for them. Are you?

People all over the state, even some legislators, think they are paying. They are not. So who pays? Let's look:

More than 25,000 people came to watch Rep. Steve Van Luven, Ken Griffey Jr., and other dignitaries break ground for Safeco Field back in March 1997.



BASEBALL STADIUM FINANCING

(Project cost: \$517 million*)

• **Mariners' contribution: \$45 million**

(These are private contributions. You don't pay.)

• **State contribution: \$122 million**

- Sales tax credit to King County (State sales tax exists regardless of whether a stadium is built. You pay no additional taxes.)

- Sports lottery games (Unless you buy a sports lottery ticket, you don't pay.)

- Baseball stadium license plates (Unless you buy this specialized plate, you don't pay.)

• **King County contribution: \$227 million**

- 10 percent admissions tax on events at facility (If you don't attend stadium events, you don't pay.)

- 2 percent car rental tax (If you don't rent a car in King County, you don't pay.)

- 0.5 percent food/beverage retail sales tax at restaurants and taverns (If you spend \$100 in a restaurant or tavern in King County, you pay 50 cents for the baseball stadium. If you never eat out in King County, you don't pay.)

* *The Mariners originally agreed to pay for cost overruns. Now, they are disputing \$100 million in cost overruns. Another \$23 million in costs will be divided by the state and King County.*

FOOTBALL STADIUM FINANCING

(Estimated project cost \$425 million)

• **Private contribution: \$100-\$123 million**

(Paul Allen pays this and any cost overruns. You don't.)

• **State contribution: \$193 million**

- Sales tax credit to King County (State sales tax exists regardless of whether a stadium is built. You pay no additional taxes.)

- Lottery games (If you don't buy a ticket, you don't pay.)

• **King County contribution: \$109 million**

- Hotel-motel tax (If you don't stay in a hotel or motel in King County, you don't pay.)

- 10 percent admissions tax on events at facility (If you don't attend stadium events, you don't pay.)

- 10 percent parking tax for facility events (If you don't park at the stadium, you don't pay.)

I occasionally eat at a restaurant in King County. My contribution to the baseball stadium is only 50 cents if I spend \$100. I also bought a brick at the stadium and two tickets to the opening Mariners game. Other than that, I don't pay. Do you? Unless you attend the games, buy sports lottery tickets or specialized license plates, you probably don't pay either.

WANTED: Office space or use of a conference room.

I will soon be losing my current office space and need to find a place to set up my 48th District legislative office, or just have the use of a conference room to meet with constituents. If you know of a location in Bellevue, Kirkland or Redmond that may be suitable for office or conference space, please call me at **(360) 786-7848**.

Affordable housing — Seeking answers

The average price of a three-bedroom home on the market for the first three months of this year ranged from \$275,000 in Kirkland up to \$339,000 in Bellevue. Average monthly rent for a three-bedroom/two-bath apartment ranges from \$1,012 in west Bellevue to \$1,331 in Kirkland.

For a young couple starting out, and even for middle-income families with two wage earners, housing affordability on the Eastside is increasingly difficult. More people are having to commute longer distances, placing a higher demand on our already congested highways.

As co-chairman of the Trade, Economic Development and Housing Committee, I came into the 1999 session with the priority of finding solutions to our housing affordability crisis. We held numerous public hearings on housing and rental prices. The debate centered upon how far government should be involved in determining a balance between affordability and the free market. Some of you say let the free market go free.

When senior citizens and the disabled are forced out of their houses and into the streets, the state will have to provide for them. Is that what the free market is all about? I don't know the answer. I'm only asking a question. Frankly, there are no easy solutions.

I wish that I could tell you we were able to address this problem. But it is too complicated to solve in such a short time frame. I am continuing to seek solutions and need to hear from you if you have any ideas about this issue.

A note on blocked calls

To those of you who have phones that do not accept "blocked" calls, please find another way to contact me. For security purposes that protect both you and me, the Legislature's telephone numbers are "blocked." That means those with Caller ID cannot see the numbers from incoming legislative calls. I am unable to contact you from my phone if your telephone is programmed to refuse blocked calls. So please provide another means of contacting you.

Technology creates opportunity with obstacles

It used to be that legislators were contacted by a phone call or a letter. But these days, e-mail provides a much quicker way to contact your state representative. While e-mail is convenient for the sender, it is having the opposite effect for me, the recipient. I am receiving hundreds of e-mails from throughout the world. I represent you — the 48th District citizens of Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond and Issaquah. I don't represent the world in Olympia. You are my priority.

I have always tried to be responsive whenever I hear from you. But your e-mails to me are getting lost within the vast amount of electronic mail I'm receiving.

To make sure your e-mail is seen by me, I have a simple request. In the Subject Box of your e-mail message, include your subject **and** the city where you are from: Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond or Issaquah.

Your help will allow me to respond more quickly to your e-mail message and it will save important time that I can use better to work for you.

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